

Okun 71

1971.

L. Okun ↓

10.000 Dr. K. Gordon Lark
10.100 Dept. Molecular Biology
10.200 University of Utah
10.300 Salt Lake City, Utah, 84112
10.400 In reference to Dr. Lawrence Okun:

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10.600 Dear Gordon:

10.700 I was privileged to be Dr. Okun's thesis supervisor
10.800 when he pursued his Ph.D. studies in my lab.

10.900 Larry Okun has one of the most incisive, critical,
11.000 imaginative minds I have ever encountered. Paradoxically,
11.100 this may give him some difficulty at the outset of his
11.200 career. He knows his capacities, is ambitious, and he will
11.300 not preoccupy himself with trivialities. He may then
11.400 meander for a while until he gets a stroke of luck and
11.500 connects with a problem that is at the same time important
11.600 and amenable.

11.700 He is passionately interested in his work and
11.800 pursues his experiments with skill and determination. He
11.900 also has a very engaging personality and converses from a
12.000 platform of broad-ranging and humanistic interests. It is
12.100 especially appropriate that he should have graduated to an
12.200 interest in neurobiology; for his training in molecular
12.300 biology is an excellent preparation for the most
12.400 fundamental innovative work.

12.500 If he enters a position that gives him the
12.600 opportunity to exercise his remarkable talents, Dr. Okun
12.700 will, I foresee, emerge as one of the leading scientific
12.710 thinkers of his generation.

12.800 One of Dr. Okun's most remarkable traits is a clear-
12.900 sighted and aggressive self-criticism, coupled with very
13.000 high standards about the ideals of scientific work and
13.100 its publication. This goes almost too far, and accounts
13.200 for his tardiness in pushing for the publication of his
13.300 Ph.D. thesis. This was a monumental volume of work, care-
13.400 fully thought through, but through no fault of Okun's
13.500 did no more than most dissertations to modify our funda-
13.600 mental thinking in his special field. In a real world,
13.700 he should be criticized for putting a higher priority on
13.800 learning new skills than in establishing his credentials
13.900 by "getting his work out". However, no one who reads his
14.000 actual thesis will blame him for any shortcomings in having
14.100 put out a formidable, articulate and meticulously organized
14.200 piece of work. In the long run, his approach to science
14.300 will be counted as an egregious merit, and I have no reser-
14.400 vations in recommending him as a colleague, a teacher, a
14.500 shrewd and dedicated investigator, and a human being of
14.600 rare grace and idealism.

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was on ACME file system @ Stanford.